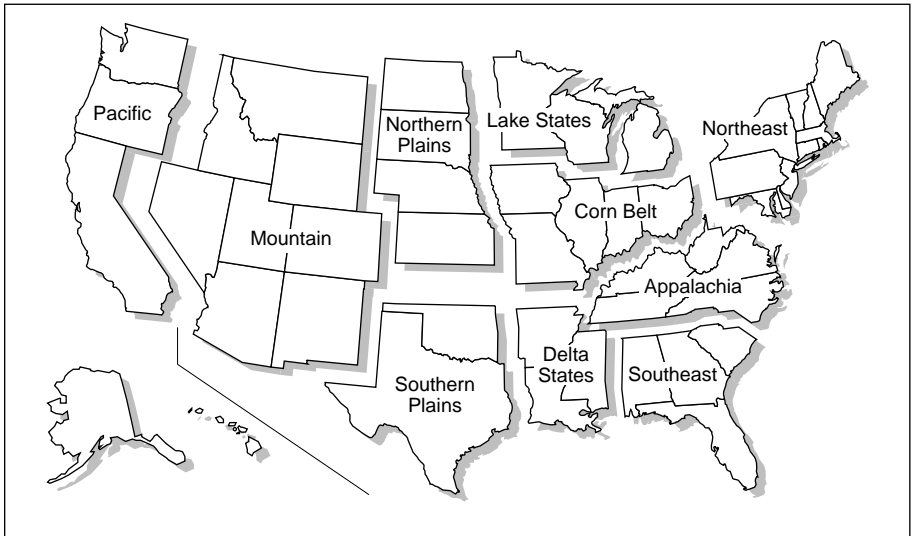


Figure 2-1.

U.S. farm production regions



■ Farms and Land in Farms

The United States had 2.19 million farms in 1998, up fractionally from 1997. A farm is defined as any establishment from which \$1,000 or more of agricultural products were sold or would normally be sold during the year. The number of farms declined less than 1 percent, overall, during the period 1988 through 1998.

Land in farms continues to decline slowly; the total of 954 million acres in 1998 is down 0.2 percent from a year earlier and down 4.1 percent from 1988. Land in farms has declined every year since reaching its peak at 1.206 billion acres in 1954. The average size of farms decreased from 452 acres in 1988 to 435 acres in 1998, while the number of farms declined at a smaller rate over the same period.

Table 2-1.

Number of farms, land in farms, average farm size:
United States, June 1, 1988-98^{1, 2}

<i>Year</i>	<i>Number of Farms</i>	<i>Land in Farms</i>	<i>Average Farm Size</i>
	<i>In 1,000</i>	<i>In 1,000 acres</i>	<i>In acres</i>
1988	2,201	994,423	452
1989	2,175	990,723	456
1990	2,146	986,850	460
1991	2,117	981,736	464
1992	2,108	978,503	464
1993	2,201	968,845	440
1994	2,198	965,935	440
1995	2,196	962,515	438
1996	2,191	958,675	438
1997	2,191	968,010	436
1998	2,192	953,765	435

¹A farm is any establishment from which \$1,000 or more of agricultural products were sold or would normally be sold during the year.

²1988-92 estimates are for a June 1 reference date. 1993-98 estimates are for the entire calendar year.

Source: U.S. Department of Agriculture, National Agricultural Statistics Service, Farms and Land in Farms

■ Farms by Sales Class

Farms are commonly classified in size groups based on the total value of their gross farm sales. Data from USDA, National Agricultural Statistics Service's annual Farms and Land in Farms report show that the greatest number of farms is in the lower sales classes, with over 64.3 percent reporting gross farm sales of less than \$20,000 in 1998. According to the survey, these small farms accounted for only 20 percent of the acreage operated. A relatively small number of very large farms produce the largest share of farm sales. Only 3.1 percent of the farms in 1998 were large operations with sales of \$500,000 or more, but they operated 17.6 percent of the land. Average farm size increases consistently with sales class, ranging from 68 acres per farm in the less than \$2,500 category to 2,471 acres for farms with receipts of \$500,000 or more.